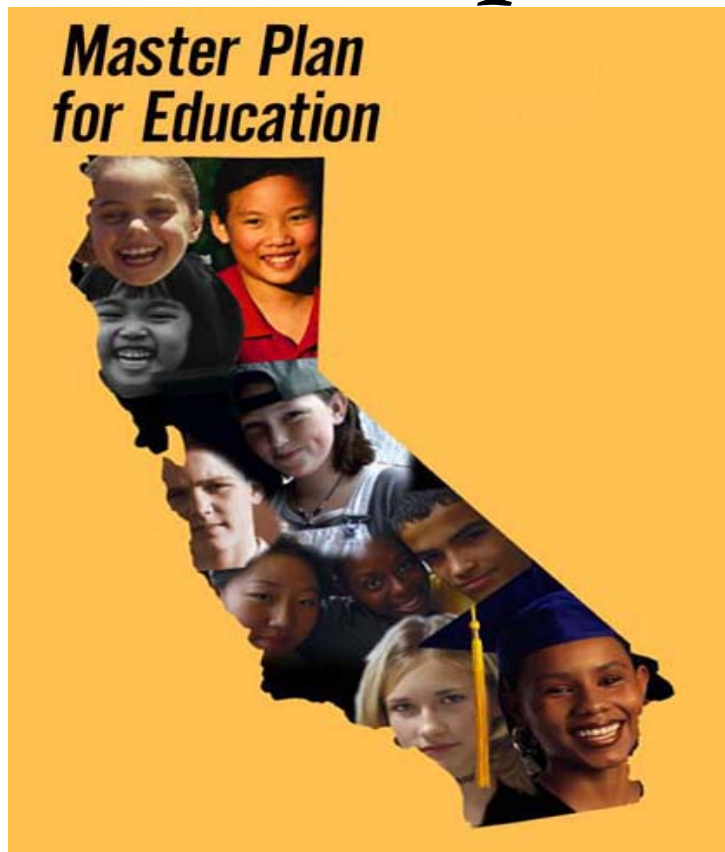


Joint Committee to Develop a Master Plan for
Education – Kindergarten through University

School Readiness Working Group

Final Report



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Master Plan for School Readiness

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Summary of Recommendations

IMPROVE SCHOOL READINESS AND ACHIEVEMENT

The School Readiness Working Group proposes a coordinated set of programs and services for families and their children, birth to grade three that are sufficiently powerful and accessible to improve school readiness and performance. The long-term goal is to reverse a widespread pattern of underachievement in California schools and close the achievement gap that affects many children across the state.

1. **FOR INFANTS AND TODDLERS:** Fund high quality programs for all low-income infants and toddlers and enhance developmental screening in the earliest years of life.
2. **FOR PRESCHOOLERS:** For the two years leading up to kindergarten entry, provide universal access to formal preschool programs that offer group experiences, standards-based curricula, and individualized transition plans to kindergarten.
3. **FOR KINDERGARTENERS:** Require kindergarten attendance for all children; phase in full-school-day kindergarten; and align preschool and kindergarten standards, curricula, and services.
4. **FOR CHILDREN IN PRIMARY GRADES:** Require “Ready Schools” plans to build on the gains that children have made during their early years.
5. **FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES AND OTHER SPECIAL NEEDS:** Establish accountability and mandate professional development to ensure effective placements of children in inclusive and appropriate early childhood education programs with suitable child-adult ratios for children with disabilities and other special needs.

BUILD A STRONGER STATEWIDE SYSTEM FOR EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION SERVICES

Strengthening services is a vital but insufficient step toward school readiness. The following recommendations aim at creating the framework needed to deliver those services, raise quality, ensure equity, and create accountability.

6. **CHILD OUTCOMES AND PROGRAM PERFORMANCE**
STANDARDS: Require the use of child learning and development goals supported by individualized learning plans and uniform program standards for all publicly funded licensed and license-exempt programs.
7. **STAFFING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:** Enact Omnibus Early Childhood Development legislation that raises standards for early childhood educators and funds a professional development system that prepares, supports, and guides the compensation of all adults who care for and educate children.
8. **ACCOUNTABILITY:** Enact legislation to create an accountability system (including program evaluation) that ensures that public investments in early care and education result in improved school readiness and, over time, improved achievement.
9. **GOVERNANCE:** Combine all existing state and federal child care and development programs into one early education system under the California Department of Education. Devolve decision-making regarding planning and resource allocation to county superintendents of schools.
10. **FINANCE:** Develop and fund a per-child allocation model of financing early care and education sufficient to meet the new system's quality standards and organizational infrastructure requirements.
11. **FACILITIES:** Improve the availability, quality, and maintenance of early education facilities.

ENHANCE FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION

The Working Group recognizes the primacy of families in children's lives and the impact of neighborhoods on family life. It recommends a system of services that promotes family responsibility and involvement in children's educational success and also addresses school readiness in all of its dimensions. Finally, the group emphasizes building community capacity to promote children's school readiness, achievement, and well-being.

12. **SCHOOL READINESS CENTERS:** Enact legislation that will allocate resources to establish a network of neighborhood-based School Readiness Centers that gives all families access to essential services to meet children's developmental needs.
13. **HEALTH CARE RESOURCES:** Provide stable and continuous health care for children and pregnant women, develop a statewide system for issuing health and development "passports," and expand insurance coverage.
14. **WORK AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT:** Provide incentives for paid family leave and employer/workplace family-friendly practices.

California Master Plan for Education: School Readiness

The Plan

The School Readiness report is based on a compelling body of scientific evidence that children’s first five years of life are crucial to their future success. The report offers recommendations to build a statewide system of early education services that families can use to capture their children’s inherent desires to learn and achieve. This early education system’s outcomes—improved educational achievement statewide, lower costs for corrective social expenditures, and a more productive populace over the long term—will ultimately benefit us all.

The Vision

Advances in science and technology have transformed our nation’s economy, creating tremendous changes in the labor market. Very few jobs exist for an unskilled labor pool; even many entry-level jobs call for literacy, a high school education, a specific skill, and advanced training. Only through education can our children fulfill their individual and collective potential.

To expand educational opportunity, we must build on positive expectations for all students and recognize that addressing cultural diversity is of the utmost importance. Because our state is home to many immigrants, cultural diversity is not merely a demographic footnote – it is one of the most fundamental characteristics of our youngest children. In California, 39 percent of children come from homes where a language other than English is spoken.¹ Therefore, we must create pathways to excellence for all students while communicating respect and support for differences in their cultural origins.

California's *Master Plan for Education* must call for substantial innovations so that all children can learn and achieve their goals. We must offer educational opportunities in the early years when parents are most engaged in their children's development and children are most receptive. That means we cannot wait until children reach age five or six to help them fulfill their promise.² Early childhood is the time to forge a strong relationship between the two most important influences on a child—family and educators---to promote children's long-term success.

"We know that by the end of third grade, when most children are eight, they tend to be locked into achievement trajectories that determine their future academic success. It simply makes no sense to ignore five of those precious eight years."

Building Knowledge for a Nation of Learners
U.S. Department of Education, 1997

Today, states across the nation are investing in efforts to strengthen school readiness. In California, where nearly half of all school-age children live in families with low incomes (under \$32,653 for a family of four) and more than a quarter under the age of five live in poverty (under \$17,650 for a family of four),³ the need for school readiness is critical. While parents have the interest and motivation to promote their children's success, they may lack the resources and support needed to make it happen. Low-income families may not have the discretionary income, health care, literacy, or English-language fluency that make it easier to foster their children's school readiness. A *Master Plan for Education* should guide the development of a flexible support system, which will enable families to participate effectively in educating their children.

The system envisioned in this plan goes well beyond the provision of direct services. The *Master Plan for Education* must identify ways to develop and retain a well qualified early childhood workforce. It should articulate plans for monitoring children's well-being and progress toward meeting specific developmental milestones and for reporting on program performance in all early education settings that receive public subsidies.

The Charge

By including school readiness in its *Master Plan for Education*, the Joint Committee to Develop a Master Plan for Education—Kindergarten through University has made a powerful assertion: healthy development and learning in children’s early years are essential for school success. We cannot afford to squander these early years; they are the time when we have the greatest opportunities to develop our children’s potential.

The Joint Committee challenged the School Readiness Working Group to look far and think big in designing a future for California’s children. Responding to this challenge, we reviewed long-existing policies and deeply entrenched assumptions about early learning and development, such as the age when public education begins and how transitions from one level of education to another are handled. We reconsidered existing “delivery systems” – such as pediatric care, mental health services, child welfare, and primary-grade education – with a view toward incorporating them into a more integrated, effective constellation of supports and services. We studied policies that will improve equity, enhance the qualifications of the people who work with children and families, and strengthen accountability. We also considered the roles of families and communities. Most importantly, we considered not only *what is*, but also *what could be*.

This Report

This report maps out a twenty-year action plan consisting of fourteen recommendations that aim to improve the school readiness of California’s children, strengthen their achievement, and bolster their chances for success later in life. The recommendations form a coherent plan and are meant to be implemented together, although we recognize that some entail major changes that will need to be addressed incrementally. We are calling for sweeping change—the unification of all publicly funded early care and education programs, both formal and informal, into one system with one set of standards.

Defining School Readiness

A decade ago, the National Education Goals Panel (NEGP) proposed as the nation's number one education goal that "all children in America will start school ready to learn." Initially, there was considerable debate about what the term "readiness" meant. Today, a view shared by many early childhood educators, and endorsed by the National Education Goals Panel, is that *a child's school readiness* has five key dimensions:⁴

Health and physical development. Children who are born with the benefit of prenatal care, and who have good nutrition, health monitoring, and early intervention, perform better in school.

Emotional well-being and social competence. Children who have secure relationships with family members and peers can become self-confident learners.

Approaches toward learning. Children's attitudes toward learning, their ways of approaching new tasks, and their skills all affect school success.

Communicative skills. Children with rich language experiences have the tools to interact with other people and to represent their thoughts, feelings, and experiences effectively.

Cognition and general knowledge. Children who have the opportunity to explore and learn from their surroundings can construct knowledge of patterns and relationships and discover ways to solve problems.

Because these five dimensions all influence school performance, initiatives to strengthen children's readiness must take all of them into consideration. Elementary schools that want to be ready for the children who enter their kindergartens need to focus on these dimensions as well.

The NEGP also developed and adopted ten attributes of schools that promote children's readiness for learning.⁵ *Ready schools:*

- Smooth the transition between home and school.
- Strive for continuity between early care and education programs and elementary schools.

- Help children learn and make sense of their complex and exciting world.
- Are committed to the success of every child.
- Are committed to the success of every teacher and every adult who interacts with children during the school day.
- Introduce or expand approaches that have been shown to raise achievement.
- Are learning organizations that alter practices and programs if they do not benefit children.
- Serve children in communities.
- Take responsibility for results.
- Have strong leadership.

Finally, the NEGP identified three objectives that reflect important *family and community supports* that are foundations for children's school readiness:⁶

Early childhood care and education. All children should have access to high-quality and developmentally appropriate preschool programs that help prepare them for school.

Family factors. Every parent will be a child's first teacher and should devote time each day to helping his or her preschool child learn. To this end, parents should have access to the training and support they need.

Child health. Children should receive the nutrition, physical activity, and health care they need to arrive at school with healthy minds and bodies and to maintain mental alertness. To this end, the number of low birth weight babies should be significantly reduced through enhanced prenatal care.

These definitions guided the School Readiness Working Group as we developed a plan aimed at improving results for California's young children and their families.

Improve School Readiness and Achievement

The School Readiness Working Group proposes a coordinated set of programs and services for families and their children, birth to grade three, that are sufficiently powerful and accessible to improve school readiness and performance. The long-term goal is to reverse a widespread pattern of underachievement in California schools and close the achievement gap that affects many children across the state.

For infants and toddlers

RECOMMENDATION 1: Fund high-quality programs for all low-income infants and toddlers and enhance developmental screening in the earliest years of life.

WHY?

In California, 1,500 babies are born each day.⁷ For each of these children, the path to school readiness begins long before entry into preschool or kindergarten. The prenatal period and the first three years of life have a powerful effect on children's ability to learn and on the social and emotional development that underlie achievement.

"School readiness investments should encompass supports for the healthy, well-founded development of infants and toddlers, who are mastering the social, emotional, and cognitive skills required for success in school and beyond."

Caring for Infants and Toddlers
The Future of Children, 2001

Parents and educators have long known that infants and toddlers thrive when they have responsive care, individual attention, and enriching experiences. Now evidence from several fields, including neuroscience, cognitive science, and developmental psychology, has converged to show that efforts to meet these essential needs do not simply comfort young children; they affect the way children's brains develop and lay the groundwork for later learning and

achievement.⁸ Given these findings, high-quality health care and child care for infants and toddlers is a crucial aspect of school readiness.

California must respond to research showing that the quality of child care tends to be poorest exactly when children are the most vulnerable—in the first months and years of life.⁹ Moreover, low-income children, who have the most to gain from high-quality care, are the least likely to experience it. This can affect children’s life prospects, because children who experience substandard care in the early years have been shown to fare less well, in terms of development and readiness, than children who have had better quality care.¹⁰ It is therefore imperative that all settings, whether in or out of the home, meet children’s basic requirements and promote positive development. A recent study of child care quality in diverse California neighborhoods showed that a strong flow of state subsidy funds was associated with higher quality.¹¹

Preventive screenings and assessments are crucial for infants and toddlers. During these formative years, some children may show signs of having delays or of being “at risk” in their development. Early intervention services and supports can help many of these children enter school with their developmental issues resolved. For other children, the effects of disabling conditions will persist, but the supports provided to them and their families through early identification, services, and learning opportunities will have a positive impact on their developmental paths.¹²

By acting on this recommendation, legislators can address these problems:

Affordable, good quality infant and toddler care is scarce, especially in low-income communities. Many child care centers do not accept infants or toddlers, and working parents often find it difficult to find care for their very young children. Only one in 20 openings in licensed child care centers is available to children under the age of two.¹³ When parents do find providers, the quality of the care offered may be inadequate. Despite progress in recent decades, parents in California low-income communities continue to have fewer good quality child care options than parents in more prosperous areas.¹⁴

There is no systematic way to gauge children’s health and developmental status. Many infants and toddlers do not receive the health and developmental screenings needed to identify and address, in a timely way, medical problems, developmental delays, disabilities, or a developmental risk for disability. According to a 2001 study commissioned by the California Children and Families Commission, “Access to diagnostic and intervention services may vary

for members of different population groups.”¹⁵ The statewide interagency data system needed to ensure accountability for these preventive health measures, as well as continuity of care, has not yet been established.¹⁶ The need for protecting confidentiality must be taken fully into account in the design of this system.

HOW?

A. Enact legislation to guarantee all low-income (or otherwise eligible) families access to subsidized, standards-based child development services.

Data demonstrate that the quality of care is poorest for infants and toddlers and that children who receive poor quality care do not achieve developmental and school readiness outcomes comparable to children who receive better services. Infant and toddler services, funded through a per-child allocation, should be available as a parental option and should include family child care, center-based care, and parenting information and support through School Readiness Centers. The guarantee should be phased in by 2010, starting in communities with schools that have an Academic Performance Index (API) in the bottom three deciles.

B. Enact legislation that establishes accountability in the health care system for providing comprehensive and continuous health and developmental screening and assessment services for all children, beginning at birth.

Children enrolled in Medi-Cal, Healthy Families, and many commercial health plans are currently offered periodic preventive health visits with developmental screenings and assessments. However, these screenings and assessments need a much stronger child development component, including psychosocial and cognitive measures. Furthermore, health care plans should be required to implement quality measurement tools to monitor health care providers' delivery of screening and assessment services.

Data from comprehensive assessments at appropriate developmental milestones (e.g., collected from children at birth and at ages one, three, and five) should be documented in a statewide data system. These assessments will assist parents with early intervention plans, if needed. Health care providers must follow up with families and appropriate providers so that

parents of children identified with disabilities, developmental delays, or learning needs receive whatever support is needed to obtain specialized services for their child.

For preschoolers

RECOMMENDATION 2: For the two years leading up to kindergarten entry, provide universal access to formal preschool programs that offer group experiences, standards-based curricula, and individualized transition plans to kindergarten.

WHY?

Research demonstrates that high-quality preschool experiences can boost academic achievement in elementary school.¹⁷

“Efforts to reform and strengthen K-12 education cannot succeed without a concerted effort to support the people and improve the programs entrusted with the care and education of our youngest children.”

Council of Chief State School Officers
Early Childhood and Family Education, 1999

Providing early care and education for children in low-income families has been a longstanding priority in California. Since 1965, the state has made part-day preschool programs, including Head Start and State Preschool, available to children who qualify based on family income.¹⁸ However, formal programs now serve only a fraction of the state’s three- and four-year-olds. Many children do not have access to the benefits of formal preschool experiences.

The case for universal, voluntary preschool beginning at age three has been advanced by policymakers, researchers, employers, parent groups, and education leaders because of its unequivocal link to children’s readiness for and long-term success in school, and because of its proven cost-effectiveness. Numerous national organizations have taken forceful positions on the long-term benefits of universal access to preschool for three- and four-year-olds, including the Council of Chief State School Officers, an organization representing the leaders of K-12 education, and the Carnegie Task Force on Learning in the Primary Grades.

The business community has also recognized the logic of investing in universal early learning programs. In 2002, the influential Committee for Economic Development, a national organization of business and education leaders, released a report entitled *Preschool for All*. This report called for universal, voluntary access for children ages three and up to preschool programs that meet recognized standards for promoting education and school readiness. The report stressed social and physical development as well as academic goals, and noted the importance of safe environments for children.¹⁹ These recommendations are being heeded as many states throughout the nation, following the lead of Georgia, New York, and Oklahoma, are considering or phasing in universal preschool policies.

California educators have long recognized the value of a high-quality preschool experience. In 1988, California's School Readiness Task Force recommended voluntary, full-day preschool programs.²⁰ In 1998, a Task Force of distinguished educators, parents, researchers, and civic and business leaders from throughout California was convened by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to consider how to make preschool programs universally available over the next ten years to all three- and four-year-old children whose families want this option. In its final report, it noted that while quality programs exist in the state, resources to support these programs are limited, and too many children are on waiting lists. As a result, "Far too many California families have few choices, or no choice, in gaining access to high-quality developmental opportunities for their preschool children."²¹ The need for universal preschool persists, but has not yet been met.

By acting on this recommendation legislators can address these problems:

When they get to school, California's students are not achieving as well as they could or should. Achievement data underscore the need for school readiness. In 2000, 80 percent of California's fourth graders scored below the proficiency level in reading set for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 85 percent scored below proficiency in math, and 86 percent scored below proficiency in science. About half of California's fourth graders cannot reach the "basic" level in reading and math—a lower standard.²² The children who take these tests are about nine years old. We can no longer ignore their access to opportunities for high-quality learning in their first five or six years. All California children should have access to high-quality early learning programs.

California is not doing enough to capture the gains that young children make before they come to school. A national study by the U.S. Department of Education estimated that, on average, one in five incoming kindergartners has difficulty adjusting to kindergarten. In high-poverty schools, the proportion is one in three.²³ Many professional groups, including the National Association of Elementary School Principals and the National Association of State Boards of Education, therefore recognize the value of providing transition activities, and advocate increased coordination between preschools and elementary schools.²⁴

California is missing opportunities to prepare children for a global society. To function in California's multicultural setting, as well as in a global society, children need not only fluency in English, but also proficiency in at least one other language. Scientists have shown that young children are biologically primed for language learning.²⁵ Efforts to begin dual-language learning during the preschool years should be phased in as we expand the number of early childhood settings where effective dual-language instruction can occur. The goal is to make every California child bilingual and bi-literate, with evidence of progress by the end of the third grade.

HOW?

- A. *Enact legislation that phases in publicly funded universal preschool in a variety of settings for all three-and four-year olds whose parents choose to enroll them.***

Preschool expansion should build on existing models of high-quality programs. It must create new spaces, beginning immediately in communities where schools have an API in the bottom three deciles, with spaces available by 2010 for all California children whose families choose to enroll them.

- B. *Enact legislation that requires all public elementary schools and subsidized child development programs to create individualized readiness transition plans for preschoolers entering kindergarten.***

Such plans must include strong family and community components. The plans must also describe how to achieve continuity between home and school and pedagogical and curricular continuity between preschool and elementary school.

C. *Enact legislation that requires the phasing in of dual-language learning for all young children in programs that receive public subsidies.*

Given California's demographics, globalization trends, and young children's receptivity to second-language acquisition, all early childhood settings should foster dual-language learning, ultimately to make every California child bilingual and bi-literate, with progress evident by the end of third grade. To recruit and retain the qualified staff needed to implement this recommendation, the early childhood development funding formula should provide incentives for providers with dual-language proficiency.

For kindergarteners

RECOMMENDATION 3: Require kindergarten attendance for all children; phase in full-school-day kindergarten; and align preschool and kindergarten standards, curricula, and services.

WHY?

About a quarter of the states now require kindergarten attendance. A significant body of research, including a recent study by the

"Kindergarten must be included in any effort to promote early education for all children. Kindergarten is unfinished business and deserves our renewed attention."

Kindergarten: The Overlooked Year
Report from The Foundation for Child Development

National Center for Education Statistics, shows that during the kindergarten year, children gain social and emotional competencies that foster achievement as they move through school. At the same time, they make measurable gains in specific reading and mathematics knowledge and skills.²⁶ Based on these findings, children who do not attend kindergarten may be denied equal opportunity to succeed as they move through school.

Research also shows that children who attend full-school-day versus half-day kindergarten do better academically and socially during the primary school years.²⁷ Participation in full-school-day kindergarten versus half-day kindergarten results in higher academic achievement, especially in reading and

math, and promotes good relationships with peers and teachers. Moreover, full-school-day kindergarten is advantageous for all children, not just children from low-income families. Studies also indicate that full-school-day programs have long-term positive effects, such as fewer grade retentions and higher reading and math achievement in the early school years.²⁸

By acting on this recommendation, legislators can address these problems:

Each year, tens of thousands of children miss the opportunities presented by kindergarten. California is missing an opportunity to give *all* children the best possible start in school and improve achievement in the primary grades.

Most kindergartners attend half-day programs—often lasting no more than two-and-a-half hours. At present, only a fraction of California’s kindergartners attend full-school-day programs. Limiting the number of children who have access to full-school-day represents another missed opportunity, since research indicates increased benefits are derived from full-school-day kindergarten.

Preschool and kindergarten standards are not aligned. California currently has a set of learning and development guidelines for preschool programs and a set of content and performance standards for kindergarten. The children affected by these standards are separated by just a few months in age, but the guidelines and standards are markedly different. The preschool guidelines stress developmentally appropriate instruction as well as social and emotional development; the kindergarten standards emphasize more narrow academic objectives, but kindergarten programs should also be developmentally appropriate. This disconnect can cause confusion for children, parents, and teachers. California needs a single, consolidated set of program standards for all publicly funded programs aimed at promoting all children’s school readiness. These program standards must recognize the developmental continuum that stretches from the early years through the primary grades and offer suggestions for easing children’s transition from one level of schooling to another.

A. *Enact legislation to include kindergarten in the compulsory education system.*

Kindergarten should be required, in keeping with provisions of legislation proposed in 2001 that would have mandated attendance in public or private kindergarten while allowing parents the option of delaying school entry for one year until their child is developmentally ready. Currently, 94 percent of California children attend kindergarten. With the more rigorous

academic standards now in place, California needs to acknowledge the importance of kindergarten in giving all children an even start. They need adequate preparation before entering the primary grades, when children are often set on academic paths that can last a lifetime.²⁹ Kindergarten programs must meet the developmentally-based needs of the whole child.

B. *Enact legislation to phase in full-school-day kindergarten for all California children, beginning in districts with schools with the lowest API scores.*

Phasing in full-school-day kindergarten should begin immediately for communities with schools that have API scores in the bottom three deciles, and the program should be expanded significantly each year until all of California's children have a full-school-day kindergarten experience. Kindergarten programs should be fully funded to provide appropriate facilities. Research indicates that in full-school-day programs, children spend more time in the types of learning activities that lead to improved achievement. Children experience higher standard scores in reading and math, less retention, better attendance, and higher ratings for many positive behaviors.

C. *Enact legislation that directs the California Department of Education to require and support continuity between the standards and curricula for preschool and kindergarten.*

These standards should balance social, emotional and cognitive outcomes and reduce the current disparities in standards and curricula. The standards should address the National Education Goals Panel's five dimensions of a child's school readiness.

For children in primary grades

RECOMMENDATION 4. Require “Ready Schools” plans to build on the gains that children have made during their early years.

WHY?

Research has shown that the gains through high-quality preschool programs can fade out over time, unless significant follow-up occurs in elementary school. The

good news is that gains can be sustained if elementary schools create literacy-rich, individualized, results-oriented programs that are aligned with the content and strategies used in high-quality preschool programs. This is true for all children, but especially for those at risk of academic failure.³⁰

“One of the key factors that contributed to program success was the duration and continuity of support received by CPC children from age three to nine... The continuity facilitated student transitions from pre-K to kindergarten and from kindergarten to the elementary school grades.”

Study of Chicago Child-Parent Centers (Abstract)
Journal of the American Medical Association, 2001

The importance of follow-up in elementary school was a major finding of a landmark study published in the 2001 *Journal of the American Medical Association*. The study followed nearly 1000 children from low-income families who participated in the school-based Chicago Child-Parent Center (CPC) study from age three through age nine. The study found that, compared with similar children who were not in the program, participants had higher educational attainment (years of schooling) up to age twenty. CPC participants were less likely to be held back or referred for special education services. Children who stayed in the program longer (from preschool through second or third grade) were less likely to be held back or referred for special education than those who were in the program for a shorter time. The researchers attributed the CPC’s impact in part to its emphasis on reinforcing elementary school gains by coordinating preschool and elementary school instructional activities, reducing class size, adding teacher aides, increasing parent participation, and providing additional instructional supplies.³¹

In characterizing “Ready Schools,” the National Education Goals Panel stressed the importance of three kinds of continuity: between home and school; between preschool programs and elementary schools; and between classroom experience and children’s daily realities.³²

Strengthening continuity in children's learning experiences can improve school success, thereby protecting state investments in preschool programs.

By acting on this recommendation, legislators can address these problems:

There is a disconnect between preschool and elementary school experiences. Currently, most elementary schools and preschools do not collaborate regularly and have few incentives for doing so. The schools relate to different delivery systems, have few resources for collaboration, and have different "cultures." As a result, children entering kindergarten often encounter a classroom and expectations that are qualitatively different from their preschool experience, which can disrupt their learning and development.³³

Elementary school curricula often overlook key principles of early childhood development. Many schools do not plan activities and support services for early primary-grade pupils based on today's best understanding of how young children develop and learn, how they benefit from rich language experiences, or how they develop emotional well-being and social competence. Children do not have the benefit of best practices that could help them become more able, confident learners.

HOW?

A. *Enact legislation that requires all schools to implement standards-based rich learning experiences and support services in kindergarten through the primary grades to preserve and extend the gains that children have made in preschool.*

Compelling research finds that the gains children make in preschools can be sustained if elementary schools create individualized services that provide family education, family literacy, and other family supports and that offer social, health, and nutrition services to children in addition to purposeful, standards-based curricula.

B. *Enact legislation that requires all public elementary schools to create, submit, and/or revise a "Ready Schools" plan.*

The National Education Goals Panel has developed and adopted research-based criteria for "Ready Schools" that should form the basis for each elementary school's self analysis and improvement plan. (These criteria are

listed on page 7). The plan’s purpose is to ensure that families, preschools, and schools collaborate to ensure children’s success in elementary school. Reviews should be conducted in alignment with existing school improvement plans, with reports submitted to the local school board and county superintendent of schools.

For children with disabilities and other special needs

RECOMMENDATION 5: Establish accountability and mandate professional development to ensure effective placements of children in inclusive and appropriate early childhood education programs with suitable child-adult ratios for children with disabilities and other special needs.

WHY?

Children with disabilities and other special needs require special attention

and support as they navigate multiple learning systems and environments. Research shows that when these children’s needs are addressed by caring, competent adults in mainstream settings, they stand to gain tremendous benefits, as do the children in their classrooms or groups who do not have disabilities.³⁴

“... the challenge of full inclusion for all children remains unrealized despite legal, research, and ethnical foundations for this practice.”

California Institute on Human Services,
Sonoma State University, 2001

Many strategies and models have been developed for teaching children with disabilities and other special needs in inclusive settings.³⁵ To apply these strategies, teachers and caregivers need a range of supports, including ongoing professional development. These supports are necessary because the goal is not simply to place children with disabilities in inclusive settings, but to support their participation and learning in a meaningful way in those settings.

By acting on this recommendation, legislators can address these problems:

There is limited accountability regarding appropriate placements. The intent of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) is to maximize opportunities for children with disabilities to be educated with their peers. Presently, it is difficult to determine the extent to which California’s young children are

receiving appropriate services in the most inclusive setting possible for each child. Across the state, a patchwork of systems, programs, and agencies serve young children with disabilities and their families. In the absence of a coherent early care and education system, many children may not be receiving appropriate services, especially those from rural areas and those whose families speak languages other than English.

Too few early educators are qualified to work in or provide inclusive settings. Families whose young children have disabilities or other special needs face significant obstacles when they try to access child care. Several recent studies have identified a shortage of qualified providers as a major barrier.³⁶ Professional development is also needed to prepare teachers and providers to identify and serve young children who may not be diagnosed with a disability but who experience developmental delays or difficulties. Along with parents, early educators can help to spot problems early, avoiding the need for long-term remediation. This diagnosis can be especially important in communities where racial, ethnic, or linguistic factors contribute to the under-identification and under-reporting of disabilities.³⁷

There are no state guidelines for child-adult ratios in inclusive settings. Broad consensus exists that inclusion is the right approach for many children with disabilities and other special needs, but there are few guidelines or supports for making it happen. According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the inclusion of children with disabilities may necessitate additional adults or smaller group size to ensure that all children's needs are met.³⁸ California has no guidelines or supports for ensuring an appropriate ratio or group size in inclusive settings.

HOW?

A. Enact legislation to establish accountability for effective placement of children with disabilities and other special needs in inclusive and appropriate early childhood education programs.

Children with disabilities and other special needs should be served alongside other children. All programs serving young children must comply with family requests to enroll children with disabilities and provide for their effective education. All providers and families should have access to a multi-disciplinary team to consult with and train adults. The team should also be available to assess children and provide early intervention services to support inclusive and appropriate services.

B. *Enact legislation that mandates professional development on educating children with disabilities and other special needs for educators who work with young children in publicly funded settings.*

Child care providers report that they need training, onsite mentoring, and additional staff support to effectively serve children with disabilities and other special needs. Providers need training on how to better work with children and to obtain ancillary services that individual children qualify for under the law.³⁹

C. *Enact legislation that establishes and funds appropriate child-adult ratios in mainstream settings that include children with significant disabilities.*

The care and education of young children with disabilities often demands more adults per child than current ratios provide. The nature of the disability and the child's needs should drive the ratio.

A Statewide Framework for an Early Care and Education System

The following recommendations create the framework needed to deliver services, raise quality, ensure equity, and create accountability.

Child Outcomes and Program Standards

RECOMMENDATION 6: Require the use of child learning and development goals supported by individualized learning plans and uniform program standards for all publicly funded licensed and license-exempt programs.

WHY?

Research shows that a key to quality enhancement is setting and enforcing standards.⁴⁰ The School Readiness Working Group took the position that any child care provider who receives public subsidies, whether home-based or center-based, should be held to standards that are aligned with research on young children’s developmental needs. There should be no exceptions to this principle.

“Recognition that individual variation is not only to be expected but also valued requires that decisions about curriculum and adults’ interactions with children be as individualized as possible...Having high expectations for all children is important, but rigid expectations of group norms do not reflect what is known about real differences in individual development and learning during the early years.”

Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8
National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1996

According to research, the components of quality preschool programs include:

- Support for growth across the child’s developmental spectrum, including cognitive, social-emotional, and motor development.
- Responsive interpersonal relationships between students and teachers.
- Small class size and low child-adult ratios.

- Program content that is well-planned and curricular aims that are specified and integrated into program activities.
- High quality professional development and supervision.⁴¹

Many early educators now recognize the importance of focusing not only on the characteristics of early learning programs (such as group size or teacher qualifications), but also on their content. Programs that have challenging, interesting activities that allow growth across all of the dimensions of school readiness help children prepare for the challenges of elementary school. The National Academy of Sciences has stated that, “While no single curriculum or pedagogical approach can be identified as best, children who attend well-planned, high-quality early childhood programs in which curriculum aims are specified and integrated across domains tend to learn more and are better prepared to successfully master the complex demands of formal schooling.”⁴²

By acting on this recommendation, legislators can address the following problems:

California has a sound framework for setting expectations for young children, but it has not yet been applied consistently. Parents and educators need a framework that they can use to set expectations for all young children and gauge their progress in meeting developmental milestones. This framework exists in the form of California’s *Desired Results for Children*. However, to date it has not been applied systematically to guide learning activities and child assessment in all subsidized settings. Furthermore, assessment instruments aligned with Desired Results are not widely used for instructional improvement and monitoring children’s achievement.

Many programs overlook a key ingredient of quality--individualized learning plans. Individualized attention to children’s strengths and needs is a key principle of high-quality early education—one that underlies California’s *Desired Results for Children* framework. That is why many high-quality early education programs (including Head Start and Early Head Start) require individualized learning plans, specifying how teachers or caregivers either adjust activities based on the developmental milestones that children have reached or have yet to master. Currently, many providers and programs do not develop individualized learning plans for the children in their care.

Many young children are in settings that have no health, safety, or quality standards. Many parents assume that all child care providers must meet basic health and safety standards, especially if they receive public subsidies, but this is not true. The regulations designed to ensure quality in child care settings do not apply to many of the settings where infants and toddlers receive care. Licensed child care supply meets only 22 percent of the estimated statewide need.⁴³ Thousands of California children are in child care settings that have no public oversight, despite the fact that they receive public subsidies. Their providers are under no obligation to maintain healthy, safe facilities; to learn cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) or key principles of child development; or to limit the number of young children in their care. Where standards are in place, different programs and funding streams (such as Title 5 and Title 22) may have different standards, resulting in inequities in services for young children. A single, consolidated set of program standards that promotes all children's school readiness is needed.

Some settings lack standards for child-adult ratios. The current lack of standards for child-adult ratios in some settings is particularly troubling. Even the most qualified teacher cannot individualize instruction and adequately supervise too large a group of young children. For infants and toddlers, the number of children that a provider is responsible for appears to be particularly important in fostering the type of interactions that support young children's development.⁴⁴

HOW?

- A. Enact legislation that requires adoption of child learning and developmental goals from the California Department of Education's Desired Results for Children, for children from birth to age five, and implement an assessment system for children ages three to five that assures appropriate usage of assessment instruments for instructional improvement and children's achievement.***

Goals for children should establish high expectations in all five school readiness dimensions: health and physical development, emotional well-being and social competence, approaches toward learning, communicative skills, and cognition and general knowledge. The goals should be used as the basis for ongoing assessment of children and instructional practice. The assessment's results should be communicated to parents regularly.

B. *Enact legislation that requires individualized learning plans for all children in publicly-supported family child care homes, preschools, and kindergartens.*

Learning plans should be based on individual, performance-based child assessments (including portfolios); updated several times each year (more frequently for younger children); and discussed with families. Providers in informal care settings should develop the plans with assistance from family child care home provider networks.

C. *Enact legislation that directs the California Department of Education to develop a uniform set of program standards, including appropriate child-adult ratios and grouping practices, for all subsidized licensed and license-exempt providers.*

Currently, Title 5 providers must meet a higher standard than Title 22 providers, which often results in inequitable services for young children. A single set of program standards is needed.

Appropriate ratios and group size influence child outcomes and must be addressed in any school readiness enhancement effort. Consequently, all subsidized settings should comply with Title 5 ratios, modified to recommend that group size not exceed 20 rather than 24. Funding must be available to implement this quality enhancement, similar to the approach used to enact class size reduction in Kindergarten through third grade in elementary schools.

Staffing and Professional Development

RECOMMENDATION 7: Enact Omnibus Early Childhood Development legislation that raises standards for early childhood educators and funds a professional development system that prepares, supports, and guides the compensation of all adults who care for and educate children.

WHY?

Many factors affect the quality of early care and education programs, but no factor is more important than the preparedness, competence, and commitment of program staff.⁴⁵

“Social competence and school achievement are influenced by the quality of early teacher-child relationships....”

“Employing qualified teachers who are satisfied with their compensation is associated with programs providing higher-quality early childhood experiences for children.”

Eager to Learn
National Academy of Sciences, 2000

Compared with elementary and secondary teachers, providers of early care and education have fewer opportunities to prepare for their roles, acquire ongoing training and support, or advance along a career path. They have fewer incentives, economic or professional, for staying in the field. Addressing these issues is necessary to improve young children’s results and school readiness.

High staff turnover rates, which threaten program quality, cannot be improved without addressing compensation. According to the Center for the Child Care Workforce, average wages in California are \$8.38/hour for child care workers and \$10.16 for preschool teachers. Family child care providers earn even less. Turnover for child care teachers reported in various California counties range from 39 percent in Sacramento County to 20 percent in Marin County.⁴⁶

By acting on this recommendation, legislators can address these problems:

California does not have enough qualified early educators. Presently, there are not enough qualified individuals working with young children. With the expansion of early childhood programs recommended in this plan, the challenge of recruiting qualified people to the early childhood field will be even greater. To develop a competent early childhood workforce—one that allows children to have adults who speak their language and reflect their culture as role models—a focus on recruitment, retention, and professional development is essential. Incentives must be created to bring new talent into the field, beginning with secondary school students. A key strategy is to create a training registry. Particularly helpful to new entrants into the workforce and those with limited formal training, a training registry could approve all continuing education training. It could also document the training received by providers. Individuals would have permanent records of their training and could use information in the registry to gain credit toward a Child Development Permit.

Standards for early childhood teachers and caregivers are low and inconsistent. Teachers who work with school-aged children are expected to have baccalaureate degrees. In contrast, those who work with younger children (including those who receive public subsidies for doing so) may not even have high school diplomas. Moreover, they are not necessarily supervised or mentored by educators with bachelor's degrees. California presently lacks consistent educational requirements for providers of early care and education.

Poor compensation results in high turnover, and children suffer the consequences. Compared with teachers in the K-12 system, those who work with younger children are very poorly compensated. This salary disparity increases turnover and impedes the continuity of care that is so important to young children. A recent study that tracked several California child care centers in 1994, 1996, and 2000 found that the situation has become increasingly urgent. Child care centers and the child care industry as a whole are losing well-educated teaching staff and administrators at an alarming rate and are hiring replacement teachers with less training and education. Compensation for most teaching positions has not kept pace with the cost of living. Teaching staff and directors reported that high turnover among their colleagues undermined their ability to do their jobs and, for some, contributed to their decision to leave.⁴⁷

Many providers have no training at all—not even the basics. Many early care and education programs require staff to attend training sessions that cover key principles of child development as well as basic health, safety, and CPR. However, many providers are exempt from these requirements. They can care for young children and receive public subsidies for doing so without receiving any training. Moreover, many providers who receive public subsidies are currently exempt from a criminal-background check. California needs to institute a minimum training requirement and screening system for all providers who receive public subsidies, without exception. When the Department of Defense turned a problem-ridden child care system into one that has been acknowledged as a model for the nation, it introduced “basic training” and background checks (for criminal records) for all providers, whether home-based or center-based. This requirement was among the elements that helped to raise quality.⁴⁸

HOW?

A. Require the California Department of Education to establish an integrated statewide professional development system to recruit, train, and credential qualified early childhood educators.

With many elements of a professional development system already in place, California must now focus on linking the system’s elements and developing a training registry. The registry will approve continuing education training and chronicle all training providers receive. The training registry must be open to all California providers, who may voluntarily participate.

B. Adopt more rigorous education requirements and certification standards.

California should require a bachelor’s degree in early childhood education or a related field for individuals who teach each group of 20 children in center-based programs; supervise those who care for and educate young children; or coordinate a network of family child care home providers.

C. Establish an early childhood education compensation and benefits system comparable to the compensation system in public schools.

For those who have a bachelor's degree or above and who perform functions comparable to their public school colleagues, salaries, benefits, and annual cost of living increases should be commensurate. For those who do not have a bachelor's degree but are working toward a bachelor's or associate's degree or a child development permit, salaries and benefits should be commensurate with public school employees who have similar training, experience, and job descriptions. Furthermore, those working toward a degree or permit who are employed caring for and teaching children in early care and education settings should receive salary increases when they successfully complete approved courses.

D. Require 48 hours of paid professional development for all providers working in programs that receive public subsidies and who have not had formal training (including providers who are license-exempt).

If the providers have not started work with young children, the professional development should occur pre-service; if they are already working with young children, it should take place in-service within a prescribed time period. Once employed, all providers must have current CPR and first aid certification and must comply with TrustLine, including renewing registration periodically.

Accountability

RECOMMENDATION 8: Enact legislation to create an accountability system (including program evaluation) that ensures that public investments in early care and education result in improved school readiness and, over time, improved achievement.

WHY?

To improve young children's learning outcomes, clear standards and accountability mechanisms must be in place. It is essential to distinguish the purposes for which

"For stakeholders to believe that an accountability system is fair and that the standards are achievable, they need information about how the system works and how they are performing.... Further, stakeholders need to feel they have input in the design and implementation of the system. All stakeholders should be informed and involved in the accountability process."

National Governors Association

accountability data are needed and how the data are to be used.

Thus far, this report has addressed two purposes of assessment and data collection. Recommendation 1 discussed collecting data to screen young children for developmental and health purposes. Using these data, individual children can be referred, if necessary, for follow-up services. The second kind of assessment, addressed in Recommendation 6, also collects and uses data to improve young children's immediate experiences. In this case, the data are collected using multiple forms of assessment to help teachers tailor instructional programs to children's needs.

A third purpose for data collection is to determine whether programs are meeting their goals. In these cases, data on individual children are aggregated, usually without identifying the individual child. These program data help program managers strengthen programs, and are particularly critical in early care and education, given the overall low quality of programs. These data may or may not be reported to the state or federal government.

Program evaluation and accountability data apply to all stakeholders and are necessary to assure the effectiveness of early care and education; yet given the specific learning needs and developmental stages of young children, precautions must be taken so that effective program evaluation and accountability systems are culturally fair, developmentally sound, and scientifically valid. Moreover, extreme care must be taken to assure that the uses of data are clear and that parents can understand and use the results appropriately.

By acting on this recommendation, legislators can address these problems:

The state has not yet invested in a strong accountability system. There is no ongoing funding to create and maintain a data system to collect and analyze program accountability data.

A lack of funding also weakens program accountability. There is no ongoing funding for independent program evaluation and student outcomes measurement.

California lacks the data system needed to ensure accountability. At present, there is no statewide early childhood child/student data system in place.

HOW?

A. Require the California Department of Education to collect and utilize data for early childhood program accountability.

To assess the effectiveness of California's programs for young children, program accountability data must be collected annually. These data should include information on program staffing, turnover, and levels of training; numbers of children served; average attendance; nature of family supports and activities; accreditation status and other program attributes.

B. To ensure that programs are effective, require collection of accountability data every three years on student outcomes for three- and four-year old children in programs that receive public subsidies.

Such data should be collected on a random sample of enrolled children, using assessment instruments that are closely aligned with California Department of Education's *Desired Results for Children*. The evaluation process must comply with strict confidentiality standards.

C. Integrate statewide early childhood data collection with kindergarten through grade 12 data collection so that such data will be used to inform efforts to improve policy and practice.

Presently, data on young children are collected by multiple entities, using different timelines, data collection tools, and systems. Moreover, these data are not linked with data collected on kindergarten through grade 12 students. A single data collection entity, such as the California Department of Education's California Student Information System (CSIS), should coordinate and assure the appropriate use of the data to improve children's school readiness, their transitions to school, and their effectiveness in school.

Governance

RECOMMENDATION 9: Combine all existing state and federal child care and development programs into one early education system under the California Department of Education. Devolve decision-making regarding planning and resource allocation to county superintendents of schools.

WHY?

Increasingly, educators recognize that early childhood, as a developmental period, stretches from birth through the primary grades. This governance plan reflects that understanding and responds to calls for greater continuity in educational services to young children from birth through grade three. For the first time, it seeks to provide a coherent system of governance for early education services in California. This step is important, because while many excellent child care and development programs exist, services are sometimes uncoordinated, delivery may be inefficient, and care is often of less than optimal quality.

“The time is long overdue for state and local decision makers to take bold actions to design and implement coordinated, functionally effective infrastructures to reduce the long-standing fragmentation of early childhood policies and programs.”

From Neurons to Neighborhoods
National Academy of Sciences, 2000

By acting on this recommendation, legislators can address these problems:

Fragmentation exists in the administration and oversight of early care and education. While there is one official lead agency for subsidized child development programs, the California Department of Education (CDE), responsibility is actually divided between CDE and the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), each with overlapping responsibilities but somewhat distinct visions and purposes. Additionally, court decisions have resulted in transfers of power from one entity to another within education or between CDE and CDSS. There is no single, direct line of accountability for early care and education results.

Fragmentation in governance is reflected in children's experiences. School readiness programs and services are treated as a separate enterprise from the schools for which they are readying children. In its 1999 policy statement on early childhood and family education, the Council of Chief State School Officers stated: "During the first eight years, continuity of child care and educational services is critical to sustain the initial positive effects of parent and family. This is particularly important with regard to pre-literacy and literacy development. Children who receive consistent services as they move across institutional structures perform better on academic and social development measures well into the elementary, middle, and secondary grades."⁴⁹

Existing governance arrangements make it difficult for parents and communities to be full partners in the early education enterprise. Because services and programs for young children are scattered in different departments and levels of government, it is difficult for parents or communities to participate in debates or decision-making processes that directly affect their children. Rethinking the governance structure helps to reposition families from recipients of services to full partners in their children's early education.

To address these issues, significant changes are needed in the governance and administrative organizational structure at both the state and local levels.

HOW?

A. *Establish a Cabinet position with the title, Secretary of Education and Child Development, and reconfigure the California State Board of Education.*

This plan seeks to provide a coherent governance system and clear lines of accountability for early education services in California. To create a single and direct line of accountability for education, this proposal replaces the elected State Superintendent of Public Instruction with a Cabinet position directly accountable to the Governor for education administration. This proposal will require an amendment of the state Constitution.

To preserve the check and balance nature of state government, the State Board of Education, the education policy-setting body, would cease to be comprised only of gubernatorial appointees. Instead, the State Board would be a combination of legislative and gubernatorial appointees and include four members from newly constituted advisory committees to the California Department of Education (see Recommendation 9C).

B. *Create two divisions within the California Department of Education, the division of Early Childhood and Primary Education (ECPE) serving children birth through grade three, and the division of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE), serving students in grades four through twelve.*

Early childhood, as a developmental period, stretches from birth through the primary grades. This plan reflects that understanding and calls for greater continuity in educational services to young children. The CDE would be reconfigured to achieve greater emphasis on early education. Two divisions would work in tandem, ensuring that children benefit from the structure of both early and compulsory education as a continuum of learning, with differences in administration invisible to children and their families.

C. *Create an advisory committee for the Division of Early Childhood and Primary Education and an advisory committee for the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education.*

Two advisory committees will assist the two new divisions of the CDE. The committees will consist of nine legislative and gubernatorial appointees with expertise in education, health, or social services. Advisory committee members would select their Chair and a second representative who would become members of the State Board of Education. (See Appendix A for committee composition)

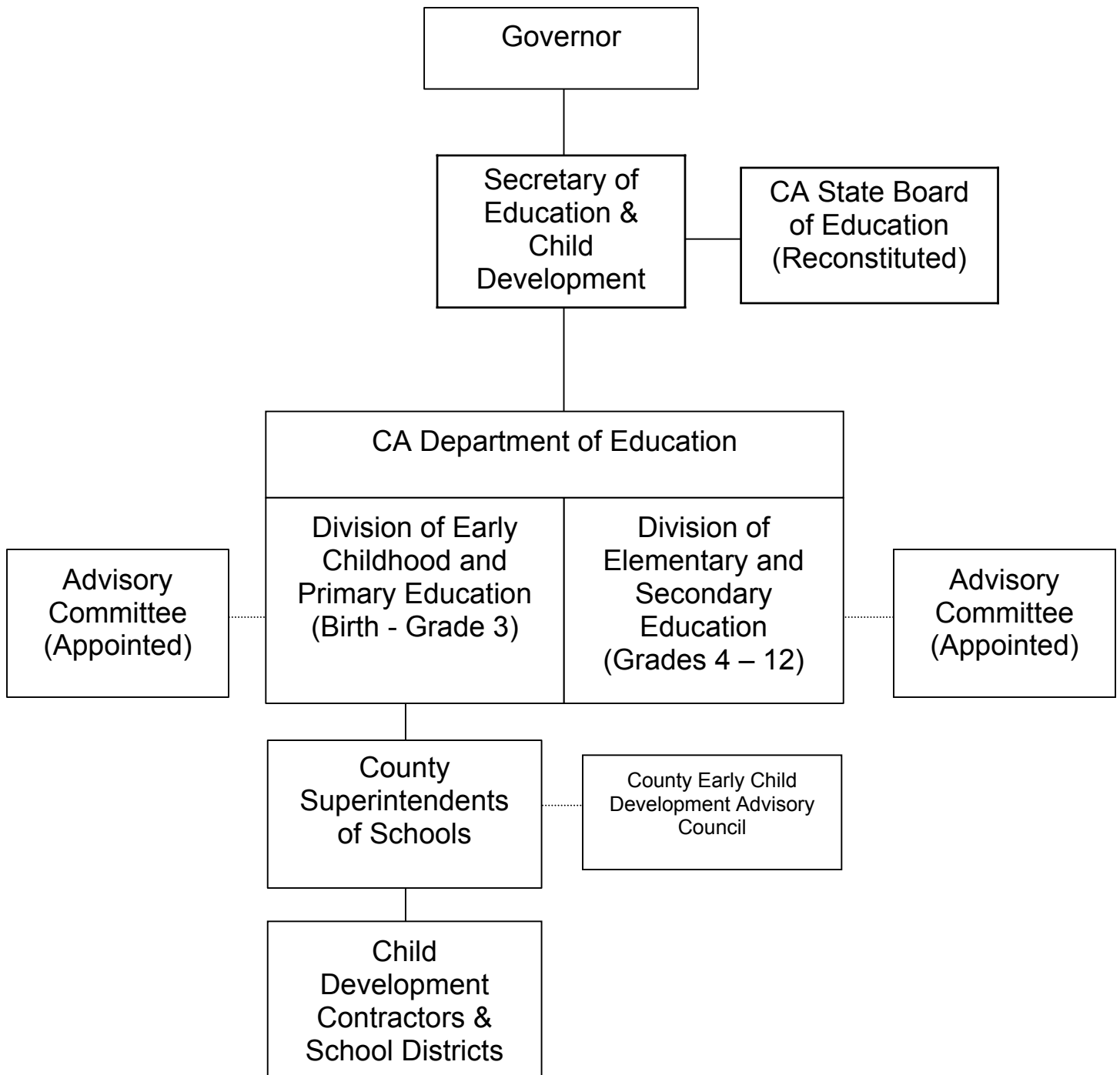
D. *Expand the role of the county superintendents of schools in the governance and fiscal oversight of early childhood education.*

The planning and decision-making authority should be placed closer to those who receive and provide services. The county superintendents of schools already provide fiscal oversight and some program operations for school districts. Making the county superintendents of schools the lead local entity for governance and finance of early education services expands an existing role. The county superintendents will be assisted in the decision-making process by a County Early Childhood Development Advisory Council. (See Recommendation 9E)

E. *Create a County Early Childhood Development Advisory Council (CECDAC) to advise the county superintendent regarding resource allocation, infrastructure development, and program and service accountability.*

The CECDAC will make recommendations to the county superintendent of schools regarding allocation of funds, professional development, quality enhancement, planning and coordination, regulations, and approval of local school readiness plans. It will also manage due process for grievances and compliance actions. The CECDAC will be composed of up to 15 members who are elected officials from local school boards, members of the child development community, parents, and business representatives.

Proposed Governance Structure



Finance

Recommendation 10. Develop and fund a per-child allocation model of financing early care and education sufficient to meet the new system's quality standards and organizational infrastructure requirements.

WHY?

Today, young children and their families are served by a variety of agencies with various funding streams.

Each has specific eligibility guidelines and requirements. This arrangement provides neither the level of funding nor the efficient coordination needed to ensure the well-being and school readiness of California's young children.

"Society pays in many ways for failing fully to exploit the learning potential of all its children, from lost economic productivity and tax revenues to higher crime rates to diminished participation in the civic and cultural life of the nation."

Preschool for All
Committee for Economic Development, 2002

California therefore needs to develop an equitable, per-child allocation model for financing early care and education. This model should be sufficient to meet the new system's quality standards and infrastructure requirements. The finance recommendations include creating a guaranteed preschool allocation for all three- and four-year olds (and additional funding for wraparound care and flexible support services for three- and four-year olds of low-income families); an allocation for all children, birth to kindergarten, to provide school readiness services to them and their families through local School Readiness Centers; and an initial allocation, to be phased in until it becomes a guarantee, to fund early care and education services and flexible support services for all low-income families with children from birth to age three.

The allocation model must also fund the organizational infrastructure of the new early care and education system, including professional development to improve quality and data collection for better accountability. To accomplish these recommendations, we propose to consolidate all child development funding sources, including those from the Departments of Education and Social Services, and to create new sources of revenue to augment existing funds.

The School Readiness Working Group recognizes that implementing these proposals requires an enormous investment on behalf of our young children.

To implement these recommendations, the state will have to incur significant costs. We have therefore suggested that some of the more costly proposals be phased in over many years.

At the same time, these costs must be weighed against the potential benefits. Investments in early childhood can mitigate the spiraling costs of corrective social systems. Today, California spends four times as much to serve a juvenile delinquent through the Youth Authority than to enroll the same child in a high-quality preschool program. Investments in early education can assure that more Californians become engaged citizens, productive workers, and consistent taxpayers. The costs of acting are high; the costs of not acting are much higher.

By acting on this recommendation, legislators can address these problems:

Current resources do not cover the costs of high quality early education for all children. While California invests considerable resources in its children under age the age of five, the investments are not commensurate with the investments made for children of school age, and they do not afford early educational opportunities to all children.

California needs strategies for funding early childhood programs that provide accountability without limiting flexibility. Categorical funding often aims to ensure services to specific populations. However, this type of funding often limits flexibility and prevents localities from concentrating resources where local need is the greatest. The regulations attached to categorical funding may also keep programs immune to quality standards. More flexible, effective funding strategies are needed.

There is no finance mechanism to address capacity-building. Present finance arrangements do not provide funds to meet the needs of the state's growing population of young children. In addition, they do not set aside monies for the supports needed to expand access to or enhance the quality of early childhood services.

Families have unequal access to essential services and resources. Creating an allocation to fund School Readiness Centers is intended to equalize families' opportunity to help children reach their full potential. As things stand, many families lack the means to access essential services and supports.

HOW?

- A. *Enact legislation that expands Proposition 98 to create a new guaranteed per-child state allocation for all three- and four-year olds to fund core universal preschool services.***

Proposition 98 funds should be increased by an amount sufficient to provide access for every three- and four-year-old child whose parents want their child to receive a high-quality preschool experience (see Recommendation 2). Phase-in of guaranteed universal preschool should be completed by 2010, starting in communities where schools have an API in the bottom three deciles.

- B. *Enact legislation to allocate additional funds for wraparound (before and after preschool) care and flexible support services for low-income families with three- and four-year olds attending universal preschool.***

Families who are eligible for subsidized child development services should receive an allocation for wraparound child care and family support services. Phase-in should match the efforts to expand core universal preschool services, so that families can receive core services and wraparound services together.

- C. *Enact legislation that creates a state allocation that will be increased annually to become a guarantee over time, providing all low-income newborns to three-year olds with early care and education services and flexible support services used at parents' discretion.***

The per-child allocation for early education should use a funding equation based on the comprehensive services model in Head Start and Early Head Start. The funds should be used for child care and development and flexible support services that the family needs (see Recommendation 1). A guaranteed state allocation should be phased in by 2010, starting with service to children from birth to age three in communities where schools have an API in the bottom three deciles.

D. Enact legislation that creates a state allocation for all children, from birth to kindergarten, to fund school readiness services at local School Readiness Centers.

Using the same revenue limit concept that provides basic education funding for each K-12 student, California should create a guaranteed allocation within Proposition 98 to serve the families of children from birth to kindergarten. This allocation should fund local School Readiness Centers, which will provide core services, such as parent education and outreach, information and referral, child development activities, peer support, and life skills development (see Recommendation 12).

E. Enact legislation to create a Financing Task Force to calculate the per-child allocation needed to fund high-quality early education services and organizational infrastructure for low-income newborns to three-year olds, for universal preschool and wraparound care, and school readiness services for families with children, from birth to kindergarten.

A California Financing Task Force should be created to calculate the per-child allocation to fund high quality early education services for newborns to three-year-olds, universal preschool, and support services for low-income children, birth to kindergarten. The allocation must invest in quality improvement, professional development and compensation, accountability, and other elements of the organizational infrastructure. The Task Force must also address the development of fee schedules for those who can afford to pay for part or all of the services provided. This Task Force should be convened immediately so that its work can advise the Legislature in setting appropriations for the above recommendations. As part of its work, the Task Force should also determine a formula for cost-of-living increases and the cost for group size reduction from 24 to 20 (see Recommendation 6).

The Master Plan Working Group also recommends the creation of an expert panel to address education finance. If the Legislature acts upon that proposal, it should expand that commission to include experts on early education and child development, and expand its mandate to incorporate the issues described above.

F. Enact legislation that consolidates under the California Department of Education child care funds that currently flow through the Departments of Education and Social Services.

Consistent with the recommendation to implement a governance structure that unifies early childhood education under one department, funds should also be consolidated and flow through one department.

Facilities

RECOMMENDATION 11: Improve the availability, quality, and maintenance of early education facilities.

WHY?

Without explicit attention from policy makers, shortages of qualified facilities are likely to hamper

expansion of preschool programs. Pressures will intensify as preschool programs expand toward universal access, although encouraging the participation of existing child care and preschool providers in state-approved programs will help.⁵⁰

"The high need for child care will not ease in the near future. The population of Californians aged zero to four is expected to increase by more than 325,000 over the next ten years."

National Economic Development and Law Center, 2001

By acting on this recommendation, legislators can address these problems:

There is a shortage of early education and child care facilities to meet current and future demand. The number of facilities serving young children is inadequate to handle currently enrolled children. Shortages are especially acute in low-income neighborhoods. Expanding kindergarten and preschool programs will dramatically exacerbate the current shortfall, necessitating swift increases in available facilities.

Many facilities do not support children's safe and healthy development. Many children now attend early care and education programs in facilities that do not lend themselves to the kinds of activities and curricula that have been shown to foster school readiness. Children need spaces that allow safe and comfortable play, indoors and outdoors. Infants and toddlers need safe, uncluttered areas

that allow for both containment and exploration. In addition to room for whole-group activities, preschoolers need facilities that allow for “learning centers”—areas where individuals or small groups can talk, sing, be read to, draw or paint, engage in dramatic play, or pursue particular interests.

HOW?

A. Enact legislation that will significantly increase the number of school facilities serving young children.

Presently, the number of public schools serving young children is inadequate to handle demand in local communities. Expanding capital outlay formulas to include kindergarten and preschool programs can significantly reduce the current shortfall.

B. Enact legislation that provides incentives to foster facility construction and development.

Such efforts might include increased state income tax credits to employers for developing early education programs, mortgage credits as incentives for higher quality family child care, low-cost loan pools, bond issues, and streamlined zoning processes.

C. Enact legislation that establishes design standards for subsidized early childhood facilities, appropriate to young children’s development.

Current building standards under Title 22 are limited to very basic requirements, such as square footage per child. New design standards should incorporate requirements that better define space based on the developmental needs of young children. The space should also be constructed and organized in ways that promote better workplace safety for the adults who care for young children.

A System of Family and Community Supports for Education

The Working Group recognizes the primary importance of families in children's lives and the impact of neighborhoods on family life. It recommends a system of services that addresses school readiness in all of its dimensions and also promotes family responsibility and involvement in children's educational success. Finally, the report emphasizes building community capacity to promote children's school readiness, achievement, and well-being.

School Readiness Centers

RECOMMENDATION 12: Enact legislation that will allocate resources to establish a network of neighborhood-based School Readiness Centers that gives all families access to essential services to meet children's developmental needs.

WHY?

Children's readiness for school is influenced by many factors, including a positive family environment, high-quality early care and education experiences, efforts to ease

transition to school, and vital communities.⁵¹ The effectiveness of a multi-faceted program that addresses these factors is provided by the Chicago Child-Parent Centers. They demonstrated a 1:7 cost to benefit ratio by combining 1) a coordinated early education system for three- to nine-year olds, emphasizing language and number skills, 2) comprehensive child and family support services including intensive center-based parent activities, and 3) well-trained and compensated staff members with small class sizes and staff to child ratios. The 17-year longitudinal study demonstrated greater levels of school readiness at

"If, as research and common sense indicate, the family is the most important and effective resource available to any individual child, then the community and its institutions should make this resource the cornerstone of strategies to improve children's well-being."

The Basics of Family Support
Family Resource Coalition

ages five and six, high school achievement test scores through age 15, less need for school remedial services, lower rates of child maltreatment, lower rates of juvenile arrest and high rates of high school completion. In addition, greater parent involvement in their children's school and satisfaction with their children's education, as well as higher expectations for their children's educational achievement were reported. By pursuing all of these aims, School Readiness Centers can help families meet their responsibilities and help children prepare for and succeed in school. They can also provide resources to early care and education providers, including home-based child care providers who often work in isolation.

Other states have found that family support initiatives can bolster children's well-being and school readiness. For example, studies of a statewide family education program administered through Minnesota's public school system show that a comprehensive family support program can be effective with many different families, can help to promote school readiness, and over time can help parents foster their children's healthy development.⁵² Other evaluations of early intervention programs that incorporate home visitation show increased immunization rates, higher levels of stimulation of children by their families, and fewer confirmed cases of child abuse and neglect.⁵³ High quality home visitation programs connected with other services, such as center-based early childhood education, joint child-parent activities, and parent groups can produce meaningful results.

By acting on this recommendation, legislators can address these problems:

Many new parents do not know where to turn to find information, resources, or advice. Polls consistently show that as they make decisions for their children, promote their health and development, and arrange for child care, most new parents want and need help.⁵⁴ Families need information and services that are easy to locate and culturally and linguistically appropriate. Many California parents believe that a neighborhood center would help meet this need.⁵⁵

Many home-based child care providers work in isolation, without access to crucial information and resources. Among California children under age five with employed mothers, nearly half (47 percent) are in home-based child care arrangements (family child care, relative care, or babysitter); among those under age three, the figure is much higher (58 percent).⁵⁶ Their caregivers tend to have little contact with other providers and often lack access to training, information, or resources. School Readiness Centers can serve as a hub for these providers, linking them to a wide range of child-care and community resources. Studies show that

informal care providers have a strong interest in expanding their knowledge and sharing experiences with their peers. Outreach services organized around an existing program (such as family resource programs or drop-in centers) can often make a difference. A study in Rhode Island found that kith and kin providers rejected “training,” but were interested in participating in “get-togethers.”⁵⁷ Staff at School Readiness Centers can provide outreach, resources, information, and networking opportunities that may be able to interest license-exempt providers in taking steps to raise quality and pursue licensing. A survey conducted in Los Angeles found that the great majority of license-exempt providers indicated an interest in becoming regulated family child care providers.⁵⁸

As their children move from one type of program to another, families need help with transitions--especially the transition to school. School Readiness Centers provide a needed nexus among families, early care and education providers, and schools to assist children and families in the transition from home to early care and education settings to kindergarten. Centers can provide continuity by offering information, sustaining needed services, and linking families to schools during the course of their child’s development from birth through the primary grades. The long-term study of the school-based Chicago Child-Parent Centers showed that children’s gains lasted through adulthood and were due, in part, to the continuity of services provided to children from age three through nine, as well as the comprehensive nature of the program, which included a multifaceted parent program and outreach activities (such as home visitation).⁵⁹ School Readiness Centers can provide these supports.

Many families have difficulty accessing community services and programs. Families seeking services and supports for their children often face a bewildering maze of systems with which they need to interface. This may be especially true for families with children of different ages and different needs. School Readiness Centers will coordinate, consolidate, and leverage local services and programs. A decade of experience with Healthy Start in California has shown that school-age children’s outcomes improve when families have access to multiple services at a single site linked to the school. Results reported in 1999 include: significant increases in math and reading scores for students most in need; decrease in family violence; improved student health care, especially preventive care; decreased student drug use and improved self-esteem and perceptions of support; and improved conditions for families in the areas of housing, food and clothing, transportation, finances, and employment.

A decade of research and practice has produced two key findings about early education. First, if early education is to strengthen school readiness, schools must play a major role. And second, schools cannot do it all, and they cannot do it alone. School's capacity to effect change hinges on strong relationships with community-based partners.⁶⁰ Over nearly four decades, Head Start has shown the benefits of linking programs and families with community-based services and resources.⁶¹ The challenge in California is to provide and coordinate those services which support the academic mission of schools. School Readiness Centers meet that challenge.

*Many families face cultural and language barriers as they try to access information and services. Barriers are also high for parents who have disabilities, or whose children have disabilities. Families often report that they want and need more information about children's needs and available services. This need is especially common among parents whose children have disabilities or other special needs, or who have disabilities themselves. Information must be available in the family's native language and in a form that is accessible to families.*⁶²

HOW?

Establish a network of neighborhood-based School Readiness Centers that gives all families access to essential services to meet children's developmental needs.

Families, especially families with young children, need an identifiable neighborhood 'point of entry' to address their questions, service needs, and supports for their growing and changing family dynamics. School Readiness Centers will provide an array of services that families can choose to access, based on their particular interests and needs. Culturally and linguistically responsive service is essential to the mission of these centers.

School Readiness Centers will provide minimum core family services defined in the new statute and also serve as a platform for delivery of, or referral to, additional services designed to reflect local preferences and needs and to build on existing community services and strengths. Core services could include parent education and life skills classes, volunteering in the classroom and attending events with their children; child development activities such as play groups and learning activities that include developmentally appropriate literacy and numeracy activities; resource and referral links to community resources and services; outreach activities including home visitation, parent-to-parent support groups, drop-in availability, crisis intervention, health and nutrition services including health screening, speech therapy, meal services, and coordination of services for families; and a comprehensive program that supports children's transitions to school.

School Readiness Centers may be based in an existing organization that expands its mission and menu of services, such as Proposition 10 School Readiness Initiative sites, Healthy Start sites (funded via CDE), family resource centers (funded via DSS/OCAP), and parent/family resource centers (funded via DDS), schools, child development centers, resource and referral programs, libraries, or health care 'homes.' Or, in remote, sparsely populated areas, it may be a virtual network that gives families access to a multidisciplinary team of professionals and a range of services. Priority should be given to funding established effective programs.

School Readiness Centers can also help to identify and fill gaps in the health and developmental services families need to promote their children's well-being and school readiness. They can help families access health insurance and connect with a health care home. At the same time, they can increase capacity

of the community to identify and serve children in need by training individuals working in family-serving agencies or organizations.

Health Care Resources

RECOMMENDATION 13: Provide stable and continuous health care for children and pregnant women, develop a statewide system for issuing health and development “passports,” and expand insurance coverage.

WHY?

Quality health care, with an emphasis on optimal child development, is an important component

“Early identification of children with developmental delays or disabilities can lead to treatment of, or intervention for, a disability and lessen its impact on the functioning of the child and family.”

Developmental Surveillance and Screening of Infants and Young Children
American Academy of Pediatrics, 2001

of an effective school readiness initiative. While expanding children’s access to health care is itself a major challenge, it does not go far enough. Families also need access to care that addresses their children’s physical and oral health as well as their emotional, social, and cognitive development. Achieving this goal means overcoming significant barriers at the provider, practice, health plan, and community level.

A key strategy for promoting healthy development is to ensure that every expectant mother and every family with young children has access to a “health care home”—a one-stop source of health care, developmental services, and referrals to other human services. The concept has been championed by the American Academy of Pediatrics. It is also a cornerstone of Healthy People 2010, the national strategic plan for improving Americans’ health, developed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

By acting on this recommendation, legislators can address these problems:

Reforms that only address educational needs cannot produce the necessary results. Raising achievement by California’s children remains a crucial challenge, based on elementary school assessments. It has not been possible to reverse this trend with education reform efforts that limit their focus to children’s academic skills or consider children’s needs only from the age of school entry.

The health care delivery system has gaps—and many children are falling through those gaps. California's current health care delivery system lacks the capacity to meet the needs of all expectant mothers and young children. Fragmented and categorical programs mean that many children fall through the cracks. Moreover, the state's ethnic, racial and socioeconomic groups have significant disparities in their access to medical, dental, and mental health services; pregnancy outcomes; and children's health and well-being.

Existing care often misses opportunities to address children's developmental needs. Too often the health care services offered to expectant mothers and young children are not reflective of the most recent findings and advancements in childhood development and other fields of science. It is critically important that the standards of practice for child health are the most current and utilize evidence-based strategies and tools. In order to achieve this high level of quality care, a comprehensive multi-level effort will be required to appropriately train and equip health care providers.

The multiple risk factors faced by many families require new approaches. The multiple and pervasive nature of the risk factors challenging today's families require us to think in new ways and seek multi-pronged solutions and integrated approaches to health, education, and the human services.⁶³ Health care providers alone cannot and should not address every aspect of children's developmental health, family health, or community well-being. Carrying out this proposal will require effective, sustainable partnerships across disciplines (including health, education, human services, and family support).

A. Enact legislation to ensure that every California child has access to a "health care home," including prenatal care.

Care for all children should be provided through a health care home with a primary care provider who offers services that are accessible, family-centered, comprehensive, coordinated, culturally competent, and linguistically appropriate. In addition to addressing the child's physical health needs, the health care home must also offer comprehensive developmental screening and assessment services, especially during children's early years, to support and enhance their cognitive, emotional, and social development.

Early and comprehensive prenatal care is essential to ensure that every child has the best start possible. Prenatal care must include ongoing regular care

and visits, parenting information, nutrition services, and psychosocial services.

B. *Enact legislation that funds a statewide health and development “passport” for every California child.*

Each child must have a health and development passport that is portable and that chronicles the health services and developmental screenings and assessments received. The passport would provide families with current information about their children that they could share with service providers and educators to assure appropriate and coordinated support. The health and development passport would be established and maintained by the child’s health care home.

C. *To increase the number of children covered, enact legislation to expand Healthy Families for children and their families with incomes up to 300 percent of poverty.*

Many working families do not have sufficient discretionary income to purchase health insurance, thus limiting their child’s access to developmental screenings and assessments, prevention services, and medical care. Furthermore, family-based coverage is more effective than child-based coverage in increasing the percentage of eligible children who actually become enrolled.

Work and family engagement

Recommendation 14: Provide incentives for paid family leave and employer/workplace family-friendly practices.

WHY?

In *From Neurons to Neighborhoods*, the National Academy of Sciences

called for “...better public and private policies providing parents with viable choices about how to allocate responsibility for child care during the early years of their children’s lives.” In particular, the study noted the importance of parental choice during the first year of life, stating: “During infancy, there is a

“By the year 2010 it is likely that 85 percent of [California’s] labor force will consist of parents.”

National Economic Development and Law Center, 2001

pressing need to strike a better balance between options that support parents to care for their infants at home and those that provide affordable, quality child care that enables them to work or go to school.”⁶⁴

“Viable choices” is a key phrase. By promoting policies that allow parents the option of staying at home with their infants or reducing their work hours, California can support children’s the early, secure attachments to parents that have been shown to underlie cognitive development and school readiness. At the same time, the state can ease the high demand and costs for infant care, which is more expensive and tends to be of poorer quality than care for older preschoolers.⁶⁵

Employers can play a significant role in helping families care for their infants and toddlers through a variety of work-based policies, practices, and programs. Most large employers have long provided basic benefits, such as health insurance and maternity benefits. A small but growing number of employers are also addressing parents’ need for time off and flexible scheduling, opportunities to “telecommute,” assistance in finding or paying for child care, or access to high quality services on site.⁶⁶

Both parents’ and employers’ concerns must be taken into account. The goal is to craft a set of policies that balance the public interest in children’s developmental needs and school readiness, on one hand, and a productive, efficient private sector, on the other. Policymakers in other countries have shown that it is indeed possible to achieve this balance.

By acting on this recommendation, legislators can address these problems:

When parents’ child care options are limited, the state’s economy suffers. According to a 2001 study by the National Economic Development and Law Center, “By providing a stable source of care, the child care infrastructure enables working parents to earn at least \$13 billion annually, a substantial and sustained contribution to the state’s economic growth and overall prosperity.”⁶⁷ Child care is especially critical for low-income workers, many of whom work non-traditional (evening, night, or weekend) hours or rotating shifts. In a study of five hundred Los Angeles residents, more than half had lost a job and more than two-thirds failed to seek a job because of difficulty finding child care.⁶⁸

Parents are facing a time crunch, and children are affected. When parents balance work with the care of young children, especially infants and toddlers, time pressures can be severe. In a recent statewide survey commissioned by the California

Children and Families Commission, four out of five working parents said that they are exhausted when they go to bed at night.⁶⁹ Nationwide, the great majority of both fathers and mothers feel they do not have enough time with their children.⁷⁰ Half of parents with children under the age of three say they end most days feeling that they spent less time than they wanted to with their young child.⁷¹ And nearly two-thirds of fathers are not content with the amount of time they spend with their children.⁷² More than parents' confidence and satisfaction is at stake. Research shows that time with parents has developmental benefits for young children; moreover, sick children recover more quickly and fully when cared for by their own parents.⁷³

Families lack the options they need to make parental choice a reality. Parental choice is widely considered to be a key element of any early care and education system. However, when it comes to infant care, parents' options are limited. Few parents have access to paid leave, which would not only secure their jobs but also replace enough of their foregone wages to make full-time parenthood possible during their babies' first weeks and months of life (or during adopted children's first weeks and months with their new families). The United States is alone among the advanced industrialized countries in the briefness of our statutory leave and is among very few countries with unpaid leave.⁷⁴ Recent polls show that most Americans and Californians favor paid leave and believe that it is best if a parent is home to care for very young children.⁷⁵

HOW?

A. Enact legislation to create a paid family leave benefit that may be based on insurance models with contributions shared among employers, employees, and public funds.

Currently, new parents have very limited family leave options. Recent research indicates that there is strong support among all Californians for paid family leave for infant care. Parents, the general public, and opinion leaders all support leave for one or both parents.⁷³ Given the crucial nature of the early years of life, the importance of parents' early and intense involvement with their children, and the costs of infant care, paid parental leave should be available for new parents.

B. Enact legislation to provide incentives for employers to implement family-friendly policies geared to helping parents carry out their parental responsibilities.

The current California tax credit emphasizes on-site child care centers. The state could provide incentives with varying credits for flexible benefit programs, flexible scheduling, job sharing, and flexible use of parental sick leave to promote employee productivity and facilitate employment among parents of young children.

Twenty Years From Now...

For each recommendation offered in this plan, this report asked the question: WHY? It is now time to restate the question, this time from the standpoint of the children, their families, and their communities. How will their lives and prospects change if this plan is carried out?

INFANTS AND TODDLERS... will have a better start in life and a better chance for later achievement, thanks to the prenatal care available to all expectant mothers and universal access to regular health and developmental assessments. These assessments, as well as consistent care from health care homes, will allow more comprehensive well-baby care, geared to developmental as well as health issues. Health problems and developmental delays will be spotted and addressed more quickly. Babies will also benefit from the expanded range of employment and leave options parents will have as they decide on the best care for their newborns, and from the family support/parent education services available from School Readiness Centers. All of the adults who care for infants--whether relatives, neighbors, family child care providers, or teachers in center-based settings--will have chances to enhance their qualifications, interact with their peers, and improve their working conditions. Caregivers will be well trained and well compensated, and will meet high professional standards. Infants and toddlers will be well cared for in high-quality settings, where every child will have a small group experience under close supervision of a familiar caregiver. Their programs may be set in public schools, early care and education centers, family child care homes; all programs will offer a group setting, giving children (including those with disabilities or other special needs) chances to play and learn with their age-mates. The learning activities they encounter will conform to infant/toddler content standards, including enriching language experiences and respect for California's diverse cultures. All of these policies, taken together, will allow infants and toddlers to have the secure attachments, responsive care, and early enriching experiences that are crucial to later school success.

PRESCHOOLERS... will also benefit from better health care and from the wide array of services available to their families. They will be able to attend preschool programs free of charge, if their parents choose to enroll them. Their programs may be set in public schools, child care centers, family child care homes; all programs will offer a group setting, giving children (including those with disabilities or other special needs) chances to play and learn with their age-mates. Their preschools will be high-quality settings, where every child will have an individualized learning plan developed in partnership with their parents and teacher and based on a comprehensive child/family assessment. Their teachers will be well trained and well compensated, and will meet high professional standards. The learning activities they encounter at preschool will conform to content standards, stressing rich language experiences and reflecting California's diverse cultures. As preschoolers approach the age of school entry, their transition to kindergarten will be eased by ongoing, joint efforts by preschools, schools, and families to ensure continuity in children's learning experiences. Children who are at risk of having trouble adjusting to kindergarten will get additional attention in the year before school entry, including an intensive summer program.

PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN... will be better prepared to benefit from classroom instruction, based on their rich early learning experiences. They will attend schools that are ready to address their strengths and needs—wherever they may be on their own unique pathways through childhood. Meeting their developmental needs and providing continuity will be key considerations of the educators who design their curricula and plan their day-to-day learning experiences. Through School Readiness Centers, their parents will continue to be linked to a wide array of services, and will have access to ongoing information about how to support their children's school success. Children in the primary grades will continue to receive health and developmental services from health care homes. Based on a strong foundation of rich language experiences, they will get a good start as readers. They will recognize the value of knowing more than one language; most will be well on their way toward functioning well in two languages.

FAMILIES... will be better able to work productively and contribute to the well-being of their families and communities. Parents will be able to choose from a wide variety of flexible, coordinated services for their young children, including health care coverage; regular health and development assessments; high-quality, safe early care and education programs; and other supports geared to the needs of individual children and families. They will have a health and development passport for each child, so that when they move to a new locality,

there will be continuity of care. Wherever they go in their communities – in the doctor’s office, at the library, at the local school, or in the welfare office – families will be able to find out about School Readiness Centers. These centers will offer a range of services and activities, based on community preferences and needs. Some may offer parent-to-parent support groups, parent education, or second-language instruction. All will serve as a hub for social services and will be able to make referrals and follow up on them. Parents will also be welcome in their children’s early education settings or schools and will be encouraged to take active part in creating individualized learning plans for their children. Over time, parents will have the satisfaction of knowing that they are better prepared for their parenting roles and that their children are better prepared to succeed in school and beyond.

COMMUNITIES... will take advantage of cross-sector partnerships to envision and implement early childhood services for their residents that reflect local cultures, languages, and preferences. They will have increased control over the design of services created with state funds; at the same time, they will be accountable for the quality of these programs. Communities will also benefit from a range of behind-the-scenes efforts to support and coordinate local programs, including strong governance, finance, and accountability systems. Communities will be able to get help from the county and the state as they strengthen equity and address a wide range of local issues, such as facilities, professional development, or curriculum development. Over time, communities stand to benefit immensely from the economic and civic contributions of residents who have been well prepared to succeed in school and beyond.

Recommendation	Now	In the future
1. For infants and toddlers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scarce, expensive infant & toddler care • No systematic way to know how individual kids are doing, or to gauge the success of public policies and programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guaranteed access to subsidized, standards-based child-development services for all low-income (or otherwise eligible) children • All children are eligible for comprehensive, regular screenings and assessments
2. For preschoolers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statewide achievement data reflect inadequate school readiness • Insufficient attention to transitions • Limited opportunities for early second-language learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any family can enroll their 3- or 4-year old in a publicly funded preschool program • Staff develop individualized learning plans and transition plans for each child • All programs promote dual-language learning
3. For kindergartners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kindergarten attendance by most but not all CA children • Limited access to full-school-day kindergarten • Disconnect between preschool and kindergarten guidelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All children attend kindergarten • All districts offer full-school-day kindergarten • Kindergarten curriculum is well aligned with preschool and elementary school curricula
4. For primary grade children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disconnect between preschool and elementary school experiences • Insufficient attention to key principles of child development in elementary school curricula 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All schools offer standards-based, rich learning experiences and support services to children in the primary grades • All schools develop annual “Ready Schools” plans
5. For children with disabilities and other special needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited accountability for appropriate placements • Shortage of personnel to work in or provide inclusive settings • No clear guidelines for making inclusion work (i.e. child-adult ratios) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programs are held accountable for effective placements in inclusive and appropriate ECE programs • Appropriate child-adult ratios established and funded • Professional development related to educating children with disabilities and other special needs mandated for all who work in publicly funded settings
6. Child outcomes and program standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inconsistent child learning goals • Inconsistent use of individualized learning plans • Inconsistent program standards • Lack of standards for child-adult ratios in many settings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An assessment system for children ages three to five is in place • CDE’s <i>Desired Results</i> are the basis for required learning and developmental goals for all children • Individualized learning plans are required for all children • CDE has in place a uniform set of program standards, including appropriate child-adult ratios and grouping practices for all subsidized settings

Recommendation	Now	In the future
7. Staffing & professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A shortage of qualified early educators • Low or inconsistent standards for early childhood teachers and caregivers • High turnover resulting from poor compensation • No minimum training requirement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An integrated statewide professional development system is in place • More rigorous education requirements and certification standards have been adopted • Compensation and benefits are comparable to those offered to public school teachers • All providers working in programs that receive public subsidies receive 48 hours of paid professional development.
8. Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No ongoing funding to create and maintain a data system that holds programs accountable for outcomes • No funding for independent program evaluation • No statewide child/student data system in place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CDE is required to collect and utilize data for ECE program accountability • Accountability data on student outcomes (for 3- and 4-year-olds) are collected every three years in programs that receive public subsidies • Statewide ECE and K-12 data collection are integrated, and are used to strengthen policy and practice
9. Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fragmentation in the administration and oversight of ECE • Discontinuity between ECE and K-12 • ECE governance keeps parents at a distance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Secretary of Education and Child Development serves in the Governor's cabinet, and works with a reconstituted State Board of Education • CDE consists of two divisions—one for birth to grade 3, and the other for grades 4-12 • County superintendents of schools play a strong role in the governance and fiscal oversight of ECE
10. Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not enough revenue to cover the costs of high-quality ECE for all who need it • Existing funds need to be better coordinated and more equitably distributed • Reliance on categorical funding limits flexibility and does not target local need • Capacity-building is not adequately funded • Unequal access to essential services and resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prop 98 has been expanded, creating a new per-child state allocation that funds universal preschool services • Additional funds are allocated for wraparound care and flexible support service for low-income families whose children attend universal preschool • A state allocation has been phased in, providing all low-income infants and toddlers with ECE services and flexible support services used at parents' discretion • A state allocation for all children, birth-K, funds local School Readiness Centers • Child care funds that once flowed through 3 departments have been consolidated within CDE

Recommendation	Now	In the future
11. Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate supply of facilities • Facility design does not consistently support children's safety and healthy development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital outlay formulas have been expanded to include kindergarten and preschool programs, reducing shortages. • A wide range of incentives enables many new facilities to be designed and built. • Design standards have been instituted, reflecting children's developmental needs.
12. School Readiness Centers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents are isolated and don't know how to connect to services and resources • Home-based providers are isolated with little access to information, training, or resources • Parents don't have information as children move from one program to another, especially when they transition to school. • Community services and programs are often hard to access • Linguistic and cultural barriers keep many families from getting the services and resources they need 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Readiness Centers in every community will offer one-stop service hubs for parents and home-based child care providers.
13. Health Care Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The health care delivery system has gaps, and children often fall through the cracks. • Existing care often misses chances to address developmental needs. • The multiple risk factors faced by many families require new approaches. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every child and expectant mother will have access to a health care home, with a primary care provider offering coordinated, culturally competent services. • Every child will have a health care passport that is portable and keeps track of assessments and services • More children will have health insurance coverage.
14. Work and family engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents child care options are limited, especially when they have infants or children with disabilities or special needs • Working parents may be exhausted and kids' outcomes often suffer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working parents will have the option of a paid leave so they can care for their own newborns or newly adopted children • Employers will provide a wider array of family-friendly employment policies, designed to give parents the time and flexibility needed to meet their children's needs

APPENDIX A: ELABORATION OF PROPOSED GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

The State Board of Education (SBE) will be reconstituted with nine voting members as follows:

- Two appointees from the new Advisory Committee to the division serving children from birth through grade three (Early Childhood and Primary Education). One of these appointees will be the chair of the Advisory Committee and one will be selected by and from the members of the Advisory Committee. (See Recommendations 9B and 9C)
- Two appointees from the new Advisory Committee to the division serving students in grades four through twelve (Elementary and Secondary Education). One of these appointees will be the chair of the Advisory Committee and one will be selected by and from the members of the Advisory Committee.
- Two appointees of the Senate Rules Committee.
- Two appointees of the Speaker of the Assembly.
- One student member appointed by the Governor.
- The Secretary of Education and Child Development will serve as the Executive Secretary (nonvoting) of the SBE. All members except the student member must be selected from persons with expertise in early childhood education; child care and development systems and infrastructure; K-12 education; or higher education in related fields.

The Division of Early Childhood and Primary Education (ECPE) that serves children from birth through grade three will:

- Receive the state and federal dollars for early childhood education (see Recommendation 10);
- Determine statewide program standards and child outcomes, as well as standards for facilities and for the certification and credentialing of those working with young children;
- Issue regulations, when needed, and consolidate and streamline Title 22 and Title 5 regulations;
- Determine funding formulas, appropriation levels to the county superintendents of schools, and percentage set-asides for the development of the early childhood organizational infrastructure;

- Establish criteria for use at the county level to assess contractors' readiness to administer the early childhood services that are delineated under the county section;
- Oversee the design and operation of a statewide accountability and data collection system for young children;
- Oversee planning regarding the coordination and delivery of services to young children;
- Establish coordinative mechanisms with the ESE to assure smooth transitions for all children throughout their educational careers.

The ECPE Advisory Committee will consist of nine appointees. At least one member must be from the ESE Advisory Committee (for coordination and articulation purposes). Members will be appointed as follows:

- Two appointees of the Governor.
- Three appointees of the Senate Rules Committee.
- Three appointees of the Speaker of the Assembly.
- One appointee of the ESE Advisory Committee.

Members shall select their Chair and the second representative who will become members of the State Board of Education. All members of the ECPE Advisory Committee must be selected from persons with knowledge, experience, and expertise in 1) early childhood education; 2) child care and development systems and organizational infrastructure; 3) K-12 education; 4) social services, including systems and infrastructure; 5) health services, including systems and infrastructure; and 6) higher education in a related field.

The ESE Advisory Committee will consist of nine appointees. At least one member must be from the ECPE Advisory Committee (for coordination and articulation). Members will be appointed as follows:

- Two appointees of the Governor.
- Three appointees of the Senate Rules Committee.
- Three appointees of the Speaker of the Assembly.
- One appointee of the ECPE Advisory Committee.

Members shall select their Chair and the second representative who will become members of the State Board of Education. All members of the ESE Advisory Committee must be selected from persons with knowledge, experience, and expertise in 1) early childhood education systems and organizational infrastructure; 2) K-12 education; 3) social services, including systems and infrastructure; 4) health services, including systems and infrastructure; and 5) higher education in a related field.

County superintendents of schools will play a key role in the governance and fiscal oversight of early childhood education:

- The county superintendent of schools (CSS) will be the lead local entity for governance and finance of early education services.
- Specifically, the CSS will receive allocations from the state for early education services. (See section Recommendation 10)
- The CSSs, upon the recommendation of the CECDAC, must distribute the funds; provide fiscal oversight; and allocate a percentage of the funds to develop the early childhood management infrastructure, including professional development, quality enhancement, licensing and monitoring, information and referral, management information systems, planning, and coordination.
- Existing providers who meet the criteria established by the ECPE will be used. The CSSs must, to the extent feasible, contract with local providers and school districts to provide essential early education services. If no suitable contractors exist, the CSS may deliver the services directly.
- The CSS is responsible for fiscal oversight of all contractors. If the CSS also provides direct services, an independent audit of the CSS must be performed and forwarded to the CDE or a contiguous CSS for review.
- The CSS must collect and report data as required by the ECPE.

The County Early Childhood Development Advisory Council will advise the county superintendent regarding resource allocation, infrastructure development, and program and service accountability:

- The CECDAC will make recommendations to the CSS about how funds will be allocated to local school districts and local providers based on established criteria. On behalf of the CSS, it will receive and approve local “Ready Schools” plans and guide and support models for

infrastructure development. It will also manage due process for grievances and compliance actions.

- The CSS will appoint CECDAC members and serve as the CECDAC Executive Secretary (nonvoting).
- Composed of up to 15 members, the CECDAC will have one-third to one-half members who are elected officials from local school boards. Other members will be from the child development community representing a variety of direct service providers, such as for-profit and faith-based providers, and indirect service providers, such as information and referral, alternate payment programs and municipalities. There will also be at least one parent and one business community representative.

APPENDIX B: COMMITTEES OF THE SCHOOL READINESS WORKING GROUP

Each of the following committees developed detailed analyses and proposals that formed the basis for the recommendations offered in this report:

Accountability (including assessment and evaluation)

Continuity and Transition from ECE to Kindergarten

Culture, Language and Pedagogy

Facilities

Family Leave

Family Support and Parenting Education

Finance

Governance

Health and Mental Health

High Quality in all Settings

Professional Development (including kith and kin and informal care)

Public Engagement

Strengthening Partnerships

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